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Depew, Chauncey Mitchell

Speech of Hon.

Chauncey M. Depew...

[New York]

[1918]

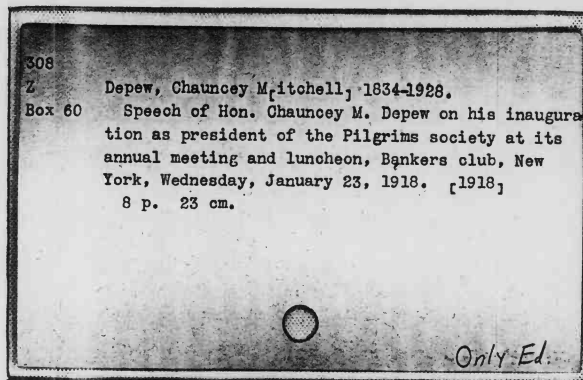
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SPEECH OF
Hon. Chauncey M. Depew

ON HIS

INAUGURATION AS PRESIDENT
OF THE PILGRIMS SOCIETY

AT ITS

ANNUAL MEETING AND LUNCHEON,

BANKERS CLUB, NEW YORK,

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 23, 1918



Jan. 31, 1919 AET

SPEECH OF HON. CHAUNCEY M. DEPEW ON HIS
INAUGURATION AS PRESIDENT OF THE PIL-
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WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 23, 1918

BROTHER PILGRIMS:

I have been in active life for sixty-two years. During that period I have done my best to meet the requirements of American citizenship and to win such honors and rewards as I could. Looking back on this long period and fully appreciating what life has done for me in continuing health and vigor, mental and physical, on the eve of eighty-four, I am content and happy. Of the many honors which have come to me, political, professional and social, none has given me more pleasure and pride than this selection by you at this crisis in the world affairs as President of our Society.

TRIBUTE TO MR. CHOATE

The record of our year, since our last annual meeting, maintains the high standard of the past. We have, however, met with a great and irreparable loss in the death of our late President, Joseph H. Choate. No man was more perfectly fitted for a position. He was our foremost American citizen in private life and had the affection and admiration of his countrymen. During his six years as Ambassador to Great

Britain, he not only met all the requirements of his great office with remarkable ability, but he impressed himself, as few Americans have done, upon the people of England. His personality and his eloquence were great factors in cementing the bonds of unity between our two countries. Earlier than most Americans he grasped the significance of this war and the part which our country should take. He was an advocate of preparedness and of the United States joining the Allies for common purposes and common protection of our most cherished principles and ideals. He died in service, and his last days will be a memorable part of the history of this struggle.

WAR PROMOTING FRIENDLIER RELATIONS

Our two societies, the one here and the other in England, have been laboring successfully for years to remove misunderstandings and promote friendlier relations between these two great English-speaking countries, and that object has been accelerated by the war beyond the fondest dreams of the Pilgrims. The rape of Belgium and the sinking of the *Lusitania*, with continued outrages and horrors, were strengthening ties until the President brought us all together by his declaration of war in April last. Lloyd George, the Premier of Great Britain, formulated in a wonderful speech the aims and purposes of all the Allies, but President Wilson, a few days later in an address to Congress, which is one of the ablest and most illuminating state papers in our history, made so clear and emphatic what we are all fighting for, that his utterance has been accepted by the world as the purpose and object of our alliance, of our diplomacies, armies and navies. When the victory comes, as it will, the greatest and strongest power in men and

resources will sit at the table desiring neither territory nor indemnity nor reward, but determined that this world shall hereafter, so far as the unity of civilized nations can make it, be a paradise of peace, justice, humanity and right.

UNITY OF ENGLISH-SPEAKING PEOPLES

We, who have been laboring for many years for unity among English-speaking peoples, can rejoice in a triumph where Great Britain will develop along her lines, and the self-governing colonies of Canada, Australia and South Africa, according to their conditions, and the United States in accordance with its genius and necessities, but together they will have common ideals and aspirations.

THE CAMP A GREAT LEVELER

If our marvellous prosperity and the wonderful results on the material side which have come to masterful men have tended to create classes and class antagonism, it is one of the beneficent results of this war that the equal draft of our people and their resources is producing national unity. The camp is the great leveler. The country and the city boys, the young men of the East Side and of the Avenue, the product of the clubs and of the gangs, are occupying the same tents, having the same rations, wearing the same uniforms, subject to the same discipline and performing the same duties. They are discovering that the same manhood, patriotism and Americanism are the foundation of them all. The gangster is becoming a gentleman, the gentleman a democrat, and both good Americans. If we would preserve this healthy, vigorous and inspiring democratic

spirit among future generations and provide for the safety of our country from internal disorders or foreign foes, we must have as part of our permanent policy universal military training. The unexpected and discouraging development in our trial and distress of racial disloyalty has demonstrated that our much boasted "melting pot" has proved a failure, but the amalgam of the camp educates and trains the soldier and the citizen to be at all times and under all circumstances American.

SUCCESSFUL BUT DISLOYAL FOREIGN-BORN CITIZENS

We had last week a singular spectacle. Men who had come here and having no opportunities for rising above their station in their own countries, developed under the hospitality and equal chances with our own native born into wonderful prosperity and wealth. They have succeeded in business and in the professions. No inducement under Heaven could make them return to the countries from which they had emigrated and subject their children to the iron rule of autocracy and militarism, and because they were using their position and influence to aid the enemy and defeat the United States, they were arrested and put upon a boat to be sent to an internment camp in the South. They were taken out of this most inclement of all seasons, out of the rigor and deprivations of our insufficient coal supply, to be treated with every comfort and every luxury under the balmy skies of Georgia and Florida. Every shivering citizen and citizeness who saw them go envied them their trip. What was their answer? As the boat passed the Statue of Liberty, they gathered at the rail and sang "Deutschland über Alles." If Americans under similar conditions, and

for like offenses, had done the same thing in Germany, they would have been lined against a wall and their journey to another world would have been hastened by rifle and machine gun.

PRESIDENT WILSON, MR. ASQUITH AND MR. LLOYD GEORGE

We are to-day in a controversy at Washington which is interesting deeply the whole country. There is a feeling everywhere that the success of this war depends upon the absence of partisanship. It is the peoples' war and all parties are anxious for victory. We have the highest respect and the greatest loyalty for our President, and we want to strengthen his hands. We can learn lessons from the experience of our Allies. In the most terrible of trials, they have been taught and slowly acquired their present policies. I was in England a month before the war when partisan politics were never so fierce. They had reached a point where civil war seemed imminent. I was in London again for several months after the war was declared. The Prime Minister of England, who has much of the power of our President, was Mr. Asquith. He is the ablest parliamentarian, one of the greatest debaters and one of the most accomplished statesmen of his time. He said, "I now see that to conduct this war successfully I must have as my coadjutors the leaders of all parties." He was too conservative and was succeeded by Lloyd George. Lloyd George for twenty years had been the most uncompromising of partisans. He had fought without mercy the aristocracy and the Unionist party, but he formed

a War Cabinet in which he placed Balfour, the leader of the Unionists, the strongest members of the aristocracy and the ablest of the labor leaders. He tried to put in both factions from Ireland.

MR. LINCOLN AND HIS CABINET

I remember as if it was yesterday the inauguration of Mr. Lincoln as one of the dramatic episodes in our history. As he faced that vast crowd in front of the Capitol, few had ever seen or knew much about him. Surrounding him as his Cabinet were the ablest leaders in American public life, nearly all of them his opponents, some from his own and some from the other party. The assembled people knew them and all about them.

Mr. Lincoln made only one appointment on account of friendship and that was his intimate friend, Caleb H. Smith, who had been a colleague in Congress. But Smith was not equal to the demands of that strenuous period and was replaced by a stronger man, John P. Usher. Simon Cameron was appointed secretary of war. Cameron was able, had great influence and power and had been a most important factor in the success of Mr. Lincoln's nomination. But when, after a year's trial, Mr. Lincoln became convinced that for a more vigorous prosecution of the war an exceptional official was required, he asked for Mr. Cameron's resignation. He then astonished the country by not only going outside his party, but by selecting an uncompromising Democrat, who had been his most bitter and virulent critic and had characterized him as a gorilla. So Edwin M. Stanton, the most energetic, able and brutal of war secretaries, had the opportunity and won great fame. Mr. Lincoln with rare tact maintained harmony

among these hostile elements in his Cabinet. He so utilized the superior ability of each that the country had the service of its ablest statesmen. But the President was stronger because of their strength. He became and remained supreme master and stands alone in the people's memory as the genius of the reconstruction of our Union.

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THIS WAR

The four greatest constructive statesmen in our history are Alexander Hamilton, Thomas Jefferson, Daniel Webster and Abraham Lincoln. If either of them had the responsibilities of this war, which are greater than all our wars put together, he could not have survived the task, but together their united experience and unequalled intelligence would have utilized all our resources and consolidated the country confidently behind them. We want President Wilson to remain our President, we don't want to overburden or kill him, we want him to have at his service all the help there is in the demonstrated brains of our countrymen.

HOW MOSES DEFEATED AMALEK

There is a story of the Old Testament. The children of Israel were at the crisis of their long journey from Egypt. Amalek and his hosts were arrayed against them. They represented the ruthless aristocracy and militarism of that period. Moses sent out Joshua with the army of the Israelites to fight. That he might watch and direct the battle, he sat on a hill and had with him the leaders who had differed with him but had the experience of their forty years of trial. When Moses held up his hands, Joshua succeeded; but when

through fatigue his hands fell down, the tide of battle was with the enemy. Then Moses, the most self-reliant character in sacred or profane history, called for the help of Aaron and Hur, who were with him, and said to them, "You stand on either side of me and hold up my hands." The result was that behind Joshua's army and in its ranks the whole power of the Israelites was united, the victory won and the Promised Land gained.

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